

The spirit of the system is suggested by its treatment of the burning question of Pauperism. The reform of traditional methods of poor relief was in the air—Vives had written his celebrated book in 1526⁵⁷—and, prompted both by Humanists and by men of religion, the secular authorities all over Europe were beginning to bestir themselves to cope with what was, at best, a menace to social order, and, at worst, a moral scandal. The question was naturally one which appealed strongly to the ethical spirit of the Reformation. The characteristic of the Swiss reformers, who were much concerned with it, was that they saw the situation not, like the statesman, as a problem of police, nor, like the more intelligent Humanists, as a problem of social organization, but as a question of character. Calvin quoted with approval the words of St. Paul, "if a man will not work, neither shall he eat/'condemned' indiscriminate alms-giving as vehemently as any Utilitarian, and urged that the ecclesiastical authorities should regularly visit every family to ascertain whether its members were idle, or drunken, or otherwise undesirable.⁵⁸

Oecolampadius wrote two tracts on the relief of the poor.⁶⁹ Bullinger lamented the army of beggars produced by monastic charity, and secured part of the emoluments of a dissolved abbey for the maintenance of a school and the assistance of the

destitute.⁶⁰ In the
plan for the reorganization of poor relief
at Zurich,
which was drafted by Zwingli in 1525, all
mendicancy
was strictly forbidden ; travellers were to
be relieved
on condition that they left the town next
day; pro-
vision was to be made for the sick and aged
in special
institutions ; no inhabitant was to be
entitled to relief
who wore ornaments or luxurious clothes,
who failed
to attend church, or who played cards or
was otherwise
disreputable. The basis of his whole
scheme was the
duty of industry and the danger of relaxing
the incen-
tive to work. " With labour/" he wrote, "
will no man
now support himself. , . . And yet labour
is a thing